TO: Principal Richburg

From: Logan Dimsdale

RE: Sensitive Topics Professional Development Opportunity

As teachers, we encourage students to critically assess not only our society but their own identities and pre-conceived ideas. In order to achieve this, students must learn the appropriate skills to have balanced discussions with one another. This becomes increasingly challenging when the topics of discussion are controversial or sensitive to our society and/or students individually. These sensitive topics can cause a deep rooted emotional reaction from some students and trigger an array of responses: disrespecting opposing views, refusing to interact in class discussions, etc. This issue has become more prominent with the popularity of Netflix series “13 Reasons Why.” To assist teachers in promoting positive experiences with these controversial or sensitive topics, I propose implementing a new professional development opportunity for teachers which would include instructional strategies on how to approach these issues.

In this two day professional development workshop, teachers and school counselors will work in close contact with mental health professionals to incorporate positive strategies to discuss these authentic issues in society. After the workshop, teachers will partner with school counselors at their school to co-plan, and possibly co-teach, at least one lesson every nine weeks that allows for balanced discussions. Teachers at each school will publish their lessons, along with reflections, on a shared online database for all teachers in the district to access. This partnership with school counselors, as well as the information gained from the workshop, will give teachers the tools to navigate these trending issues to promote critical thinking skills and freedom of expression from the students.

As an English Language Arts teacher, I have connections within the education community with experts on teaching sensitive subjects in schools. Furthermore, as a member of the National Association against Mental Illness, I also have connections within the mental health community to recruit professionals to assist with the workshop. At your convenience, please contact me so we may discuss my professional development proposal and its implementation.